

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ABU DH 01599 221139Z

13

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-06 ISO-00 OC-01 CCO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

DOTE-00 EB-07 H-01 INR-05 IO-10 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

NSCE-00 SP-02 PRS-01 RSC-01 SS-15 USIE-00 USSS-00

SY-04 FAA-00 WRD-01 SCCT-01 SSO-00 INRE-00 /075 W

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O P 221030Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE NIACT 2256

INFO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE NIACT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY

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3.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:

SUBJ: HIJACKING OF BRITISH AIRWAYS AIRCRAFT IN DUBAI

1. BRITISH CONSUL GENERAL IN DUBAI ARMITAGE GAVE US FOLLOWING ACCOUNT
OF HIJACKING OF BRITISH AIRWAYS AIRLINER IN DUBAI IN EARLY MORNING
HOURS
OF NOVEMBER 22.

2. AIRCRAFT WAS ON LONDON-BEIRUT-DUBAI ITINERARY BOUND EASTWARD
FROM DUBAI. TRANSIT PASSENGERS AS WELL AS CAPTAIN OF AIRCRAFT HAD
JUST DISEMBARKED FROM AIRCRAFT WHEN THREE ARABS BURST INTO TARMAC
FIRING AUTOMATIC WEAPONS AND RUSHED TOWARD AIRCRAFT. THEY HAD
APPARENTLY CLIMBED OVER AIRPORT SECURITY FENCE. EYEWITNESSES SAY
TERRORISTS SEEMED TO BE FIRING INTO AIR, BUT IN PROCESS TWO CIVILIANS
WERE WOUNDED. ONE WAS INDIAN AIRHOSTESS FROM BRITISH AIRWAYS
AIRCRAFT (NOT SERIOUSLY WOUNDED). THE SECOND WAS LOCAL AIRPORT
SWEEPER WHO WAS SERIOUSLY WOUNDED. THIS HAPPENED AT 0040 HOURS.

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3. HAVING BOARDED AIRCRAFT AND SEIZED CO-PILOT AND CREW IN COCK-PIT, TERRORISTS PASSED DEMAND THROUGH CO-PILOT THAT AIRCRAFT BE REFUELED AND CAPTAIN BE IMMEDIATELY SENT ON BOARD. IN THREE HOUR PERIOD THAT ENSUED BEFORE AIRCRAFT FINALLY TOOK OFF, AIRCRAFT PERSONNEL ON GROUND AND AIRPORT SECURITY PEOPLE ON HAND PLAYED FOR TIME TO ALLOW CHIEF OF POLICE MAJOR JACK BRIGGS AND UAE DEFENSE MINISTER SHAIKH MOHAMMED BIN RASHID TO ARRIVE ON SCENE. TO SPEED THINGS UP, TERRORISTS MADE VARIOUS THREATS, ALL RELAYED BY CO-PILOT, INCLUDING HOLDING A PISTOL AT HEADS OF PASSENGERS AND CREW MEMBERS, THREAT TO SET THE AIRCRAFT ON FIRE, THREAT TO KILL THE PASSENGERS, AND AT ONE POINT, PIN FROM GRENADE WAS PULLED TO REINFORCE THEIR SERIOUSNESS OF PURPOSE. CAPTAIN OF AIRCRAFT FINALLY BOARDED AND AIRCRAFT WAS REFUELED. NEGOTIATIONS WERE CONDUCTED BY CHIEF OF POLICE AND SHAIKH MOHAMMED. DECISION WAS MADE NOT TO TRY TO FORCIBLY DETAIN THE AIRCRAFT FROM TAKING OFF. AIRCRAFT TOOK OFF AT 0349 WITH ESTIMATED 27 PASSENGERS ON BOARD AND MOST OF TEN MAN CREW. 48 PASSENGERS WERE LEFT IN TRANSIT LOUNGE. ARRANGEMENTS NOW BEING MADE TO FIND THEM ONWARD TRANSPORTATION.

4. TERRORISTS SPOKE ENGLISH AND ARABIC OVER AIRCRAFT RADIO, BUT OTHERWISE GAVE NO CLUE AS TO THEIR NATIONALITY OR AFFILIATION. THROUGHOUT DIALOGUE WITH SECURITY FORCES IN DUBAI, THEY MADE NO DEMANDS EXCEPT THAT CAPTAIN OF AIRCRAFT BE SENT BACK ON BOARD, AND THAT AIRCRAFT BE REFUELED AND ALLOWED TO TAKE OFF.

5. WHEN AIRCRAFT TOOK OFF NO DESTINATION WAS GIVEN AIR CONTROLLERS IN DUBAI, BUT SUBSEQUENT COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN AIRCRAFT AND GROUND MADE IT CLEAR THAT TERRORISTS HAD INSTRUCTED CAPTAIN TO HEAD FOR BEIRUT. AIRCRAFT OVERFLEW BEIRUT AT ABOUT 0700 THIS MORNING AND HEADED WEST. CAIRO AIRPORT REPORTEDLY WAS DECLARED OPEN TO RECEIVE AIRCRAFT BUT HIJACKERS APPARENTLY DECIDED TO PROCEED TO TRIPOLI. ARMITAGE SAID THAT FCO HAD INSTRUCTED ITS EMBASSY IN LIBYA TO REQUEST LIBYAN AUTHORITIES NOT TO CLOSE TRIPOLI AIRPORT TO AIRCRAFT.

6. BRITISH CONSUL GENERAL HAD NO DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF NATIONALITY OF PASSENGERS. EYEWITNESSES STATE THEY APPEAR TO BE MOSTLY INDIAN. WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO CHECK AS TO WHETHER ANY US CITIZENS AMONG THEM. IN ANY CASE NO PASSENGERS HAD BEEN INJURED AS OF TIME AIRCRAFT TOOK OFF FROM DUBAI.

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7. DURING ATTACK ON AIRCRAFT A SEABOARD WORLD AIRLINES CARGO PLANE WHICH WAS PARKED ON TARMAC NEARBY SUFFERED MINOR DAMAGE FROM AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE. AFTER REPAIRS, CAPTAIN OF AIRCRAFT STATED THAT DAMAGE WAS SLIGHT, AND CONTINUED ON HIS SCHEDULED FLIGHT. STERNER

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